Keeping in touch

News and notes from
the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

June 1992

UFMCC Brings Healing Amid Destruction

Standing for Justice in L.A.

Death, fires, looting and massive arrests in Los Angeles, CA, last month have profoundly affected UFMCC.

The Fellowship headquarters are located just two blocks from where major fires and looting occurred. Based on recommendations by the police, the headquarters were closed for a day and a half April 30 and May 1. The UFMCC offices and staff were unharmed, but their neighborhoods were affected to differing degrees.

Similar destruction occurred in the area surrounding MCC-LA, but no MCC members were killed or injured.

"UFMCC deplores the verdict and the injustice it represents," said Rev. Elder Troy Perry, UFMCC founder and moderator. "We also deplore violence of any sort. I sense the despair that minorities feel in believing that it is impossible for them to receive justice in the American legal and economic system."

The violence erupted after a jury found white police officers not guilty in the highly publicized beating of Rodney King, an African American.

Rev. Perry is calling for UFMCC to create racial justice by establishing a White People Healing Racism and People of Color groups in every local church. They already exist at the district and denominational levels.

(please see Justice, page 4)

Giving Aid in Guadalajara

UFMCC's disaster relief efforts in Guadalajara, Mexico, are being coordinated through Iglesias de la Comindad Metropolitana (ICM) Guadalajara.

Rev. Elder Troy Perry, founder and moderator of UFMCC, sent an urgent appeal to all UFMCC churches asking for prayers and cash contributions immediately after a series of explosions April 22 left approximately 200 people dead, 700 injured and 8,000 homeless. The violent explosions were caused by a petroleum plant.

The explosion occurred within several blocks of ICM Guadalajara, but none of its members were injured or killed. Rev. Tomas Garcia, Extension Coordinator for Mexico and Central America, also lives in the immediate vicinity of the disaster.

Rev. Perry's appeal asked for donations to meet the needs of the grieving, injured and homeless. As of May 19, almost $1,000 had been collected and transmitted to Guadalajara.

When the explosion occurred, Rev. Robert Arthur had just completed teaching the "Preaching" segment of the Orientation to MCC Pastoring program in Guadalajara designed for Central American students. There were 18 enthusiastic students in the class from Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Juarez, Guadalajara and Managua, Nicaragua. President Sandra Robinson had just arrived to teach pastoral counseling.

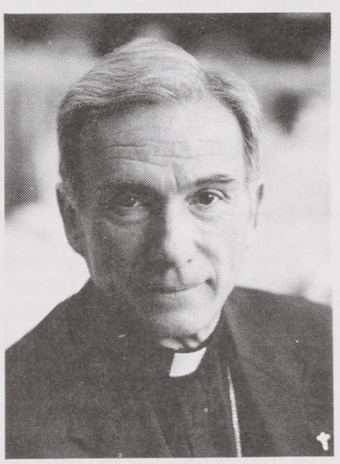
(please see Guadalajara, page 3)

Northwest District Elects Rev. Tom Bigelow

Rev. Tom Bigelow was elected Northwest District Coordinator at the Northwest District Conference May 15-17 in Salem, OR.

Rev. Bigelow, who currently serves as Southeast District Coordinator, was elected on the second ballot to complete the one-year term created by the resignation of Rev. Ed Sherriff.

He will assume his new position July 1. At that time the assistant district coordinator of the Southeast District, Rev. Linda Beane, will begin service as acting district coordinator there. The Southeast District will elect a new district coordinator at its conference in November.



Rev. Tom Bigelow

Rev. Bigelow, who served as an Episcopal priest in Seattle, WA from 1968-70, plans to live in Seattle, while the Northwest District office remains in Sacramento, CA. "I'll be in the field most of the time," he said, explaining that he plans to visit all of the district's 41 churches over the next year.

"I always have a two-pronged approach," he said. "I want to make sure the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached to every lesbian and every gay man in the district. And I want to be a pastor to the pastors." The travel program will be partially financed through love offerings.

He said his decision to seek election in the Northwest was spiritually based. "Basically, I was confronted by the Holy Ghost," he explained. "I believe that if you're concerned about an area, you should go and do something about it."

A native of Wisconsin who was raised in California, Rev. Bigelow is a graduate of Church Divinity School of the Pacific in

(please see Rev. Tom Bigelow, page 4)

Pride is an MCC Tradition

June marks the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969 when lesbians and gay men resisted police harassment in a New York City bar.

In June 1970, the first lesbian and gay pride parades were held in several cities in memory of Stonewall. MCC, then only two years old, marched in the first pride parade in Los Angeles, CA. The 1970 MCC contingent is pictured at left: Rev. Elder Troy Perry and his former lover Mr. Steve Jordan; Troy's mother, Mrs. Edith Perry; Mr. Jack Alcoct; Mr. Leo Hunt; and Mr. Pat Vestal.

After the parade, Rev. Perry began a 10-day fast for lesbian and gay rights. ❐

UFMCC marched in the first Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade in 1970

AIDS Task Force Meets

The Long-Range Planning Task Force for UFMCC AIDS Ministry met for the first time April 25.

"The one-day meeting was extremely productive with a high level of group synergy," said Rev. Elder Don Eastman, executive director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry.

The group developed plans for a needs assessment and discussed creation of a new model to help churches whose pastor is diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

Present at this meeting were Rev. Jim Mitulski, Ms. Jane Rogers, Rev. Paul Tucker, Mr. Larry Young, Dr. Lori Dick, Sr. Rodolfo Albarran, Rev. Steve Pieters and Rev. Eastman. ❐

Three Graduate from Samaritan

Samaritan College is proud to announce the graduation of Dr. Lori Dick, D.O., Dr. Joseph Picarri, Ph.D. and Ms. Christen Chew on Friday, June 19 at 7:30 p.m. at MCC Los Angeles, CA. There will also be a special scholarship presentation to Ms. Beatrice Bell, member of the MCC Los Angeles Board of Directors. All are invited to attend this celebration. ❐

Samaritan to Bestow Joint Degrees

On April 21 President Sandra Robinson and Dr. Tom Reveley, member of the Samaritan College Board of Trustees, met with President Ken Smith, Dean William Myers and Dr. Ted Jennings of Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) in Chicago to formalize the beginning plans for development of a joint degree program. These discussions are leading to an agreement in which students may apply to both Samaritan College and CTS and, if accepted, attend classes and graduate with accredited degrees from both schools.

CTS offers several Master's and Doctoral level degrees but no undergraduate degree. They will accept the "Orientation to MCC Pastoring" proficiency required for UFMCC credentials as well as other proficiency requirements. They will teach the courses except "Orientation" on campus in Chicago. This is consistent with Samaritan College and the Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee's policy which does allow for equivalent credits from seminaries. This does not, however, address accreditation of Samaritan College's undergraduate degree but does provide a model agreement which can be used with undergraduate and graduate level educational institutions. ❐

Keeping in Touch is a monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We are a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation.

Keeping in Touch may be freely copied for distribution to UFMCC members and friends. Portions may be reprinted in UFMCC church publications, with attribution to *Keeping in Touch*. For other distribution, please request permission.

Send address changes, news and ideas to: *Keeping in Touch*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd, #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100.

Editorial Board:
Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Moderator
Mr. Ravi Verma, Director of Administration
Rev. Kittredge Cherry, Editor

Deadline for each issue: 15th of previous month.
Ms. Nancy Fackrell, Typesetting

Close Encounters: A Tale of Lesbian/Gay Pride

By Ms. Diane Disbrow

Crowds of people moved swiftly toward their destination in the Dallas Airport as I hurried to catch my connecting flight to Phoenix, Arizona. After boarding the plane, I found that I had a seat mate for the duration of my travel time.

We sat in silence for several minutes. I noticed she was dressed in a blue jean skirt and western style blouse. Her belt was adorned with turquoise, as well as her bracelet and rings. Her salt and pepper hair added a soft touch to her blue-gray eyes and dimpled face.

"Are you from Texas?" I asked, after observing her dress.

"Oklahoma," she smiled.

"My name is Diane," I said, as we fastened our seat belts.

"Mine's Mary," she replied with a slight accent.

"Are you going to Phoenix?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm attending the Episcopal Convention. I am head of one of the committees there and my committee has been waiting for me to arrive," she said.

How interesting that we were both attending church conferences in the same city. I thumbed through the General Conference information on my lap. I continued to study the choice of workshops on Thursday.

As I read, I wondered what Mary would be talking about at her conference. What kind of committee was she on? "What topics will you be covering during your convention, Mary?"

She seemed anxious to tell me all she could about her plans. "Our convention will be addressing the issue of women's role in the church, homosexuals in the church, third world ministry, racism, church growth, and lay ministry," she said.

"Sounds interesting," I answered. It seemed to me that we had a lot in common.

"What will you be doing in Phoenix?" she asked.

"I will be attending a church conference also," I said. "Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches."

"Oh, I've heard of that church. Is it very large?" she asked.

"We have churches all over the world," I explained, "And we are growing every day. We have our General Conference every two years and I am fortunate enough to be able to attend and represent my local church as a Lay Delegate."

I noticed she was glancing at the material I had been reading. "What do you talk about at your conference?" she asked.

"Well," I said, "We will be discussing many of the same issues you will be talking about at your conference, only I will be one of the topics of conversation at YOUR conference. I am a lesbian. My church ministers to the gay and lesbian community."

Mary's response was positive and supportive. She was anxious to know all she could about our church, and I was excited about sharing God's work in our community.

Wheels touched down in Phoenix, and we prepared to leave the plane. "God bless, and have a great conference," I said, as we turned toward the exit.

"I'm so glad we had this chance to meet," Mary said. "You have been a blessing."

As I entered the terminal, I once again found myself among the rush of busy travelers. Mary and I went our separate ways, knowing that during the week to follow we would each become a voice in the future of God's church.

Our brief encounter on flight had become a bridge between two churches.

Ms. Disbrow is a member of MCC of Living Faith, St. Louis, MO. ❐

celebrate our freedom!

On Saturday, July 4, the beautiful Majestic Theater in Dallas, TX will host a major celebration of lesbian and gay freedom led by Rev. Troy D. Perry, founder and moderator of the UFMCC. The rally in Dallas will begin with the lively music of the Oaklawn Band and a presentation of lesbian and gay military personnel, featuring Rev. (Captain) Dusty Pruitt, Advocate Woman of the Year '91. Inspiring gospel music will be followed by Rev. Perry's dynamic message. He will challenge individuals to discover their own spiritual freedom and dedicate themselves to the service of humanity. This is the first in a series of large rallies featuring Rev. Perry. ❐

Guadalajara

(continued from page 1)

Two days after the explosions, Rev. Garcia, who is also dean of Samaritan, took President Robinson to review the devastated areas just three blocks from his home, and took the first offerings of food from UFMCC to the Salvation Army where some of the children who lost their parents in the explosion were housed. ❐

General Conference in Australia?

General Council has voted to recommend that the 1997 General Conference be in Australia and has mandated the International Concerns, Research and Development (ICRD) Division to begin designing a comprehensive, strategic plan to fulfill this goal. They are presenting questions and answers about General Conference in Australia as a regular feature in *Keeping in Touch* over the next few months. If you have any comments or questions about issues not addressed here, please contact ICRD through the Fellowship office by Aug. 31.

What are the health requirements for getting into Australia?

i) None

ii) There are no restrictions on people who are HIV positive or have AIDS/Slim disease. If a person with an HIV/AIDS condition becomes ill they will be treated automatically.

iii) No immunization is required except from some African and Asian countries where yellow fever and typhoid are endemic.

iv) Travel/health insurance is strongly recommended.

Are there any restrictions on entering Australia?

None

What currency is acceptable in Australia?

Only Australian dollars can be used. Other currency can be changed at airports, banks, and hotels before you leave. Traveller's checks should be in Australian dollars. VISA, MasterCard, American Express and Diners Club are accepted.

BBC Puts MCC on TV

MCC in East London, England, will appear on a British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) television program on June 16.

Ms. Jane Clark, a member of MCC in East London, was approached by the BBC to appear when the "Open Space" program covers bisexuality. The program will look at the lives of four or five bisexual people. The segment about Ms. Clark will be about 10 minutes long. Filmed at MCC London, the segment will include scenes from a worship service with members of MCC in East London and other London MCC congregations.

"Jane will be talking about the development of her sexuality, her acceptance of it and feeling of ease with it, and the role that MCC has played in the development of her sexuality and spirituality," reports *Eurovision*, the newsletter of the European North Sea District. ❐

Marian Apparition Honored

A special Mass celebrating the 11th anniversary of the continuing apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia will be held at Divine Redeemer MCC, Glendale, CA, June 21.

On June 24, 1981, six teenagers in the mountain village of Medjugorje reported that the Virgin Mary appeared to them on a hillside, and has continued to do so every day since. Mary reportedly told them, "I have come to remind the world that God does exist, He loves all of you, and wants you to be truly reconciled to Him. Without this reconciliation there can be no real peace. I am the Mother of all people, believers and non-believers alike."

Struck by the universality of Mary's words, and their similarity to UFMCC's message, some MCC members, and finally the pastor, Rev. Stan Harris, travelled to Medjugorje. All returned convinced that the apparitions are genuine, and that gays and lesbians are included in Mary's message.

MCC Glendale is an ecumenical church with a Catholic flavor that has a special outreach to PWA's through the Missionaries of Mercy house cleaning service. The first international MCC shrine of Mary has been established at this site, and prayer requests are sent in from all over the world. ❐

Justice in L.A.

(continued from page 1)

Rev. Perry had to cancel his plans to attend the Gulf Lower Atlantic District (GLAD) Conference that weekend because of the curfew imposed during the riots. GLAD used this opportunity to adopt a statement which concludes:

"As a conference we are committed to continuing toward the elimination of racism in our world. We pledge a close and active examination of our own participation, and from that a development of ways of consciousness and action that will move us closer to a world in which all the 'isms,' which are symptoms of separation from God, are challenged." ❐

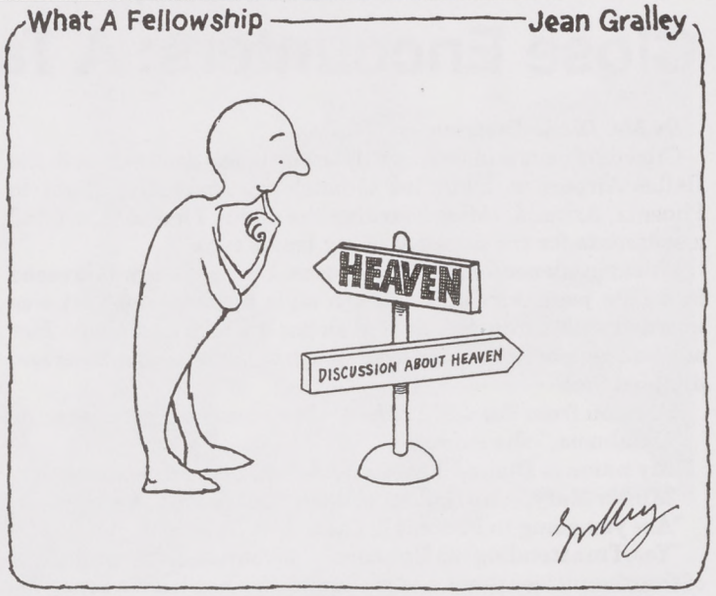
Rev. Tom Bigelow

(continued from page 1)

Berkeley, CA. He became an Episcopal priest, serving in Seattle and New Mexico, before leaving the Episcopal Church in 1974 because of his gay sexual orientation.

Since then, he has served at various times as the first Church Extension Officer in England, Gulf Lower Atlantic District Coordinator, and Southeast District Coordinator (since 1988). He has pastored MCC churches in London and Bournemouth, England; Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; and Ft. Myers and West Palm Beach, FL.❐

What A Fellowship — Jean Gralley



Transitions

Rev. Dwayne Johnson was elected interim pastor of **MCC Richmond**, VA. He is a Church of the Nazarene minister who is transferring his credentials to UFMCC.

Rev. T. Edward Helms was elected pastor of **Church of the Trinity MCC**, Sarasota, FL. He most recently served as pastor of **First MCC of Kansas** in Wichita, KS.

Ms. Sue Read of Minneapolis, MN, tendered her resignation as chair of White People Healing Racism, a division of the Department of People of Color. **Ms. Jean Strickland** of Austin, TX, has become acting chair. ❐

Positions Available

Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix, AZ, is seeking a part-time pastor. For more information, contact Larry R. McCarthy, Pastoral Consideration Team, c/o Gentle Shepherd MCC, 3425 E. Mountain View, Phoenix, AZ 85028.

MCC in Knoxville, TN is seeking candidates for a full-time pastoral vacancy. ($18,080 - remuneration package). For an information packet, please call Nathan Monell at (615) 637-1646 or write to P.O. Box 5562, Knoxville, TN 37918. ❐

In Memory

Mr. Claude Bosse'

Mr. Claude Bosse', who was the spouse of Rev. Chris Osborne for several years, died of AIDS May 12 in their home. He was 44. Mr. Bosse' and Rev. Osborne attended MCC Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He is survived by his spouse; two daughters, Candice and Janet; his parents and one brother.

A memorial service was held May 19 in Toronto with Mr. Evan LeBlanc of the MCC Toronto staff officiating. ❐

Starting Churches — How?

The Mid-Central District is creating a manual for starting new churches in its district, and is looking around the Fellowship for input. Anyone who would like to share information about resources, experiences and/or ideas, please contact Rev. Kevin Carney, Mid-Central District Clergy Representative, 1045 - 22nd Street, Rock Island, IL 61201, or call (309) 786-7213. ❐

Around The Fellowship

Praises

A bilingual prayer session in English and Swedish was held by **All God's Children MCC** (West Midlands) in Birmingham, England, in April. **Rev. Margaret Simpson** is pastor.

Rev. Ralph Conrad, pastor of **Good Shepherd Parish MCC** in Chicago, IL, was appointed by the mayor to the Council for Lesbian and Gay Issues, part of Chicago's Human Relations Commission.

More than 180 people attended **MCC Long Beach**, CA's 20th anniversary dinner and dance April 24. **Rev. Dusty Pruitt**, pastor, was also selected as the Community Grand Marshal of the city's lesbian and gay pride parade.

Rev. Dee Dale, pastor of **MCC Louisville**, KY, was commended in a resolution passed by the Kentucky House of Representatives "for her dedication to providing direct services to people living with AIDS and those who are HIV-positive" as president of Community Health Trust.

Living Springs MCC, an Outreach Ministry led by **Ms. Lynne Reay and Ms. Cecilia Eggleston,** is steadily building up contacts in South Wales, United Kingdom. In May the church did a leafletting campaign around the pubs and clubs of Cardiff to invite people to the church.

Rev. Paul Shoopman, pastor of **MCC Modesto**, CA, was part of a panel for police training during May. The panel discussed ways to build better understanding of minorities and cultural differences.

Rev. Richard Matera, pastor of **MCC of Greater Providence**, RI, testified in favor of a gay and lesbian civil rights bill before Rhode Island house of representatives and senate committees in April. May marked the first time that MCC of Greater Providence hosted the monthly AIDS healing service sponsored by the state's council of churches.

MCC North London, England, celebrated its 10th anniversary on Easter Sunday.

Church of Our Savior MCC, Boca Raton, FL, had its offer accepted for purchase of a new church building. The property is 1.77 acres and has a large building. In less than two years, the church has grown to 130 members and Easter Sunday attendance surpassed 240. **Rev. John Jacobs** is pastor.

Mr. Earl Silvers of **MCC Columbus**, OH, was named the 1992 Supporter of the Year by the AIDS Service Connection in Columbus.

Nursing home administrator **Mr. Terry Ralston** of **MCC Knoxville**, TN, will be a presenter at "Diversity with a Difference: Serving 3 Million Aging Gays and Lesbians," a conference hosted by the American Society on Aging June 22 in San Francisco, CA.

MCC Sydney, Australia, has started holding morning worship services, which are followed by a luncheon for people with AIDS. **Rev. Gary Walker** is pastor. ❐

Prayers

As we celebrate **Pentecost** on June 7, may the Holy Spirit come and renew UFMCC and the whole creation.

Rev. David Presley in Arlington, TX, was hospitalized in April with an undiagnosed mass in his lung.

The **Mid-Atlantic District Committee** voted to close **New Covenant MCC in Baltimore**, MD, as of April 30. The assistant district coordinator will work with interested people from New Covenant to explore the possibility of Special Work status in the future.

Rocks were thrown through a window at **St. Mary's MCC**, Greensboro, NC, May 8 during a HeartSong concert. Glass shattered over the congregation, causing cuts and bruises. One rock nearly grazed the head of **Rev. Christine Oscar**, pastor. ❐

Top 20 Tithes - April 1992

1.	MCC Toronto, Ontario, Canada	CAN $	4,365.40
2.	MCC Dallas, Dallas, TX	US $	2,977.12
3.	Church/Holy Spirit, Ft. Lauderdale, FL		2,641.74
4.	MCC Washington, Washington, DC		2,165.63
5.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA		2,110.02
6.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX		2,049.35
7.	MCC San Francisco, San Francisco, CA		1,551.14
8.	King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL		1,462.58
9.	First MCC of Kansas, Wichita, KS		1,450.24
10.	MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO		1,433.28
11.	MCC Tampa, Tampa, FL		1,154.16
12.	St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville, FL		1,113.18
13.	MCC/Greater Kansas City, Kansas City, MO		1,078.60
14.	River City MCC, Sacramento, CA		973.52
15.	MCC New York, New York City, NY		971.29
16.	Agape' MCC, Ft. Worth, TX		938.78
17.	Church of the Trinity MCC, Sarasota, FL		896.03
18.	MCC Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	CAN $	885.35
19.	Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale, IL		841.08
20.	Harvest MCC, Denton, TX		810.06

{These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's income that is reported to Fellowship headquarters by the 10th of the following month}

Top 20 Per Capita - April 1992

1.	MCC Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	CAN$	99.48
2.	Christ Alive MCC, Vancouver, BC, Canada		34.58
3.	MCC Augusta, Augusta, GA	US$	25.40
4.	Calvary MCC, Redwood City, CA		23.77
5.	MCC Silverlake, Los Angeles, CA		23.01
6.	Church of the Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL		22.64
7.	MCC of the Gentle Shepherd, Vancouver, WA		21.98
8.	Pikes Peak MCC, Colorado Springs, CO		21.07
9.	MCC Santa Barbara Cnty, Santa Barbara, CA		20.63
10.	MCC Ocean of Life, Costa Mesa, CA		20.38
11.	Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY		20.27
12.	MCC Hickory, Hickory, NC		20.19
13.	MCC San Jose, San Jose, CA		20.10
14.	Faith Eternal MCC, Springfield, IL		19.84
15.	Church With A Vision MCC, Longview, TX		19.10
16.	MCC Rockville, Rockville, MD		18.70
17.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA		18.69
18.	MCC Living Spring, Eureka Springs, AR		18.55
19.	Eternal Light MCC, Olympia, WA		17.49
20.	MCC of the Disciples, Washington, DC		17.42

UFMCC Makes Progress in Europe

Dublin Hosts Women's Weekend

By Ms. Doreen Shambrook

In Dublin's fair city where the girls are so pretty...

Irish song. With apologies. I mean you would have thought we had learned something about feminism this weekend...

We came by train and boat and plane and car. Fourteen women from the United Kingdom. To join with four of our sisters in the Dublin church, Emmaus MCC. This was a first for many of us. First time in Ireland, first weekend spent with women, first function of the Women's Secretariat, European North Sea District. Mary Reynolds, lay pastor in Dublin, arranged our accommodation in a restored Georgian building. Real history. We spent from Saturday to Monday getting to know one another. There wasn't time to do more, except sample the obligatory draught Guinness in the local hostelry. We mostly talked and talked, had a little massage, and then talked some more. Then we ate together and did some more talking. We were a mixed bunch. I suppose our differences were highlighted in our varied nationalities, Welsh, English, Polish, Irish. We had some laughs and some conflict. We shared very powerfully in our worship; it was just so good to share the peace with so many women, and the music and singing. It felt good to be together. Not lesbians, not feminists, not separatists, but WOMEN. We dreamed about what we could do together. It was powerful, we were powerful.

Ms. Shambrook is from MCC North London, England. ❐

UFMCC women attend a retreat in Dublin

Danish Church Reports News

By Rev. Mia Anderson

As some of you may already know, Markens Liljer MCC of Copenhagen, Denmark moved to the National Lesbian and Gay Organization's building over a year ago. This year, we have succeeded in becoming more well known in the gay and lesbian subculture. The latest issue is that we have been asked by 'Gay Liberty' to produce and exhibit a display about UFMCC and our congregation.

As pastor I have been asked to join the ecumenical working group for Christian gay men and lesbians, as well as being instrumental in proposing religious rights in our society, and within gay organizations. This really is a first for Denmark!

Markens Liljer MCC has been asked to talk to different groups within the gay organization. We have also been asked to be part of the planning team for the big worship service on World AIDS Day. Until now, the Lutheran State Church has organized this event.

One of our members is very active in 'The Positive House' (for people who are HIV+). We as a church hope that this liaison, together with the World AIDS Day service, will bring us more into contact with people living with HIV or who have AIDS.

Recently we have introduced a rota in church for the five members and regular attenders to take turns in setting up, preaching and leading the service. To help facilitate this we are planning to introduce a course on preaching skills in May. Our church newsletter will be resurrected at Easter after a year in hibernation.

Overall, the church is feeling better than it has for a long time. ❐

Reprinted from "Eurovision"

Delegates Attend Seminar in U.K.

By Rev. Ian Westby

Rev. Tom Bigelow, District Coordinator from the Southeast District; Rev. Hong Tan, District Coordinator from the European North Sea District; Rev. Ian Westby, Ecumenical Officer, United Kingdom, and pastor of Pax Christi MCC Southampton; Rev. Neil Thomas, pastor MCC Bournemouth; Deacon Peter Parker and Mr. David Harris, Lay Representatives from Pax Christi MCC Southampton, attended the one-day seminar on "Issues in Human Sexuality" April 27.

The speaker who most impressed me was Episcopal Bishop John Spong, who from the beginning acknowledged the presence of the UFMCC delegation, warmly greeting Rev. Bigelow who he has known for some time. During the course of the morning all UFMCC persons present were introduced to Bishop Spong and his wife Christine. All six UFMCC persons had heard the bishop speak at our own General Conference in Phoenix, AZ.

My own most memorable thoughts lie with the fact that Bishop Spong once again spoke the same words that we heard in Phoenix, that as long as he is around and there is breath in his body, he will continue to raise the awareness that lesbian and gay Christians are children of God, and that they too are called of God, to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ.❐